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**SUPERIOR COURT COST STUDY  
FISCAL YEAR 1976-77**

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**LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT  
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# The Superior Court

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

FRANK S. ZOLIN, EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Presiding Judge William P. Hogoboom  
Los Angeles Superior Court  
Room 204, County Courthouse

## SUPERIOR COURT COST STUDY – 1976-77

Dear Judge Hogoboom:

The Superior Court cost study for Fiscal Year 1976-77 updates cost studies originated in 1970 and further refined in 1974-75. The purpose of these studies is to identify the "cost of doing business."

Availability of cost figures by program category is of great assistance in planning and evaluating court operations. Since these studies were initiated many requests for this information have been received from courts, judicial officers, justice agencies, other governmental organizations, the media and general public.

Cost computations reflect both direct (net County cost) and indirect (overhead) expenditures for services provided in seven Superior Court program categories: Criminal, Civil, Juvenile, Family Law, Probate, Mental Health and Appellate. The costs are reflected in summary form and shown also in terms of totals for each program category, totals per court department per year, and totals per court department per day. The methodology used in computing the costs is set forth in the appendix to this report.

The most significant findings of this study are:

- Public expenditures for Superior Court operations during Fiscal Year 1976-77 totaled \$110.3 million;
- \$44.0 million (40%) of the total expenditures is directly attributable to the Superior Court, including \$10.1 million for indirect (overhead) costs and \$6.6 million for the State's portion of judges' salaries;

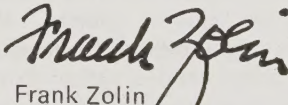
- \$66.3 million (60%) of the total expenditures reflects costs for support services provided to the Superior Court by the County Clerk, District Attorney, Public Defender, County Counsel, Probation Department and Sheriff.

The costs borne by litigants in civil proceedings and expenditures for private counsel representing persons charged in criminal or juvenile proceedings are not reflected in this study. These costs may well approach tens of millions of dollars. We do not have the capability to estimate these expenditures with any degree of accuracy.

This study was conducted by Francis K. Cholko, Director of Administrative Services. It is the result of combined efforts of his Finance Office and the fiscal and management services offices of supporting County departments.

Without the cooperation of District Attorney Van De Kamp, Sheriff Pitchess, Public Defender Littlefield, County Counsel Larson, Chief Probation Officer Fare, County Clerk Corcoran and their respective staffs, completion of this study would not have been possible.

Sincerely,

  
Frank Zolin  
Executive Officer

*California - Highest local*  
*- State Capital.*



### SUMMARY BY PROGRAM CATEGORY

TOTAL CRIMINAL	\$ 52,026,473	47.2%
TOTAL CIVIL	16,049,530	14.5
TOTAL JUVENILE	32,292,939	29.3
TOTAL FAMILY LAW	5,065,689	4.6
TOTAL PROBATE	2,110,302	1.9
TOTAL MENTAL HEALTH	1,447,519	1.3
TOTAL APPELLATE	1,348,261	1.2
GRAND TOTAL	\$110,340,713	100.0%
TOTAL AVERAGE COST PER COURT PER YEAR (235 Courts) =	\$ 469,535	
TOTAL AVERAGE COST PER COURT PER DAY (250 Days) =	\$ 1,878	

### SUMMARY BY AGENCY

TOTAL SUPERIOR COURT	\$ 44,010,479	39.9%
TOTAL COUNTY CLERK	6,753,647	6.1
TOTAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY	21,016,529	19.0
TOTAL PUBLIC DEFENDER	9,591,889	8.7
TOTAL COUNTY COUNSEL	1,018,966	.9
TOTAL PROBATION DEPARTMENT	15,203,126	13.8
TOTAL SHERIFF	12,746,077	11.6
GRAND TOTAL	\$110,340,713	100.0%

# CRIMINAL

% of Total

## SUPERIOR COURT

Net County Cost	\$12,833,469			
Indirect Costs		\$ 3,039,121		
State Portion of Judges' Salaries			\$ 2,439,333	
			18,311,923	35.2

## COUNTY CLERK

Net County Cost	1,353,499			
Indirect Costs		984,590		
			2,338,089	4.5

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Net County Cost	13,190,632			
Indirect Costs		3,957,997		
			17,148,629	32.9

## PUBLIC DEFENDER

Net County Cost	4,352,355			
Indirect Costs		1,923,935		
			6,276,290	12.1

## PROBATION DEPARTMENT

Net County Cost	1,820,363			
Indirect Costs		559,835		
			2,380,198	4.6

## SHERIFF

Net County Cost	3,644,091			
Indirect Costs		1,927,253		
			5,571,344	10.7

## NET COUNTY COST

\$37,194,409

## INDIRECT COSTS

\$12,392,731

## TOTAL CRIMINAL

\$52,026,473 100.0%

TOTAL PER COURT PER YEAR (65 Courts) = \$ 800,407

TOTAL PER COURT PER DAY (250 Days) = \$ 3,202

# CIVIL

% of Total

## SUPERIOR COURT

Net County Cost	\$ 6,181,273		
Indirect Costs		\$ 2,836,217	
State Portion of Judges' Salaries			\$ 3,180,170
			12,197,660
			76.0

## COUNTY CLERK

Net County Cost	- 1,728,007		
Indirect Costs		2,405,370	
			677,363
			4.2

## SHERIFF

Net County Cost	2,085,651		
Indirect Costs		1,088,856	
			3,174,507
			19.8

## NET COUNTY COST

INDIRECT COSTS	\$ 6,538,917	\$ 6,330,443	
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## TOTAL CIVIL

\$16,049,530 100.0%

TOTAL PER COURT PER YEAR (93 Courts) =

\$ 172,576

TOTAL PER COURT PER DAY (250 Days) =

\$ 690

# JUVENILE

% of Total

## SUPERIOR COURT

Net County Cost	\$ 4,720,394			
Indirect Costs		\$ 1,710,571		
State Portion of Judges' Salaries			\$ 351,198	
			6,782,163	21.0

## COUNTY CLERK

Net County Cost	2,173,479			
Indirect Costs		1,110,210		
			3,283,689	10.2

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Net County Cost	2,816,818			
Indirect Costs		837,447		
			3,654,265	11.3

## PUBLIC DEFENDER

Net County Cost	1,941,513			
Indirect Costs		831,866		
			2,773,379	8.6

## COUNTY COUNSEL

Net County Cost	347,275			
Indirect Costs		249,416		
			596,691	1.8

## PROBATION DEPARTMENT

Net County Cost	9,484,871			
Indirect Costs		3,128,954		
			12,613,825	39.1



Juvenile (cont'd.)

			% of Total
SHERIFF			
Net County Cost	\$ 1,700,925		
Indirect Costs		\$ 888,002	
		\$ 2,588,927	8.0
NET COUNTY COST	\$23,185,275		
INDIRECT COSTS		\$ 8,756,466	
	TOTAL JUVENILE	\$32,292,939	100.0%
	TOTAL PER COURT PER YEAR (37 Courts) =	\$ 872,782	
	TOTAL PER COURT PER DAY (250 Days) =	\$ 3,491	

# FAMILY LAW

% of Total

## SUPERIOR COURT

Net County Cost	\$ 2,245,585			
Indirect Costs		\$ 1,687,877		
State Portion of Judges' Salaries			351,198	
			\$ 4,284,660	84.6

## COUNTY CLERK

Net County Cost	-557,343			
Indirect Costs		775,817		
			218,474	4.3

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Net County Cost	-5,196,513			
Indirect Costs		4,469,299		
			-727,214	-14.3

## PUBLIC DEFENDER

Net County Cost	38,689			
Indirect Costs		16,577		
			55,266	1.1

## PROBATION

Net County Cost	153,064			
Indirect Costs		56,039		
			209,103	4.1

## SHERIFF

Net County Cost	673,688			
Indirect Costs		351,712		
			1,025,400	20.2

NET COUNTY COST	-\$ 2,642,830			
INDIRECT COSTS		\$ 7,357,321		

TOTAL FAMILY LAW \$ 5,065,689 100.0%

TOTAL PER COURT PER YEAR (30 Courts) = \$ 168,856

TOTAL PER COURT PER DAY (250 Days) = \$ 675

PROBATE				% of Total
SUPERIOR COURT				
Net County Cost	\$ 808,288			
Indirect Costs		\$ 596,780		
State Portion of Judges' Salaries			\$ 78,044	
			1,483,112	70.3
COUNTY CLERK				
Net County Cost	-92,485			
Indirect Costs		128,738		
			36,253	1.7
COUNTY COUNSEL				
Net County Cost	-72,991			
Indirect Costs		495,266		
			422,275	20.0
SHERIFF				
Net County Cost	110,811			
Indirect Costs		57,851		
			168,662	8.0
NET COUNTY COST	\$ 753,623			
INDIRECT COSTS		\$ 1,278,635		
		TOTAL PROBATE	\$ 2,110,302	100.0%
		TOTAL PER COURT PER YEAR (5 Courts) =	\$ 422,060	
		TOTAL PER COURT PER DAY (250 Days) =	\$ 1,688	

# MENTAL HEALTH

% of Total

## SUPERIOR COURT

Net County Cost	\$ 386,831			
Indirect Costs		\$ 161,022		
State Portion of Judges' Salaries			\$ 39,022	
			586,875	40.5

## COUNTY CLERK

Net County Cost	115,132			
Indirect Costs		62,705		
			177,837	12.3

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Net County Cost	269,197			
Indirect Costs		80,775		
			349,972	24.2

## PUBLIC DEFENDER

Net County Cost	136,011			
Indirect Costs		60,123		
			196,134	13.5

## SHERIFF

Net County Cost	89,309			
Indirect Costs		47,392		
			136,701	9.5

## NET COUNTY COST

INDIRECT COSTS	996,480	412,017		
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TOTAL MENTAL HEALTH \$ 1,447,519 100.0%

TOTAL PER COURT PER YEAR (2 Courts) = \$ 723,760

TOTAL PER COURT PER DAY (250 Days) = \$ 2,895

# APPELLATE

% of Total

## SUPERIOR COURT

Net County Cost	\$ 145,188			
Indirect Costs		\$ 101,832		
State Portion of Judges' Salaries			\$ 117,066	
			364,086	27.0

## COUNTY CLERK

Net County Cost	-55,978			
Indirect Costs		77,920		
			21,942	1.6

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Net County Cost	456,147			
Indirect Costs		134,730		
			590,877	43.8

## PUBLIC DEFENDER

Net County Cost	201,672			
Indirect Costs		89,148		
			290,820	21.6

## SHERIFF

Net County Cost	52,912			
Indirect Costs		27,624		
			80,536	6.0

## NET COUNTY COST

INDIRECT COSTS	\$ 799,941	\$ 431,254		
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TOTAL APPELLATE DEPARTMENT (3 Judges Assigned) \$ 1,348,261 100.0%

TOTAL APPELLATE DEPARTMENT PER DAY (250 Days) = \$ 5,393



APPENDIX  
SUPERIOR COURT COST STUDY

**Methodology**

All cost distributions reflected in the study were based upon the Superior Court's seven program categories: Criminal, Civil, Juvenile, Family Law, Probate, Mental Health, and Appellate.

The primary reference sources used in identifying and distributing court and supporting agency costs were as follows:

1. Superior Court Judicial Officer Allotment, Fiscal Year 1976-77 — reflected the total number of permanent and temporary judicial officers utilized during the report year less the number of permanent judicial officers assigned to the State Appellate Court. For fiscal year 1976-77, the full time equivalent of 235 judicial officers was utilized by the Los Angeles Superior Court.
2. The 1977-78 *Program Analysis/Goals and Objectives* — document submitted to the Board of Supervisors by the Chief Administrative Officer on May 6, 1977. This document sets forth detailed information on departmental programs and their costs. It represents the County's program budget.
3. The certified Indirect Cost Proposals for the Superior Court and all supporting agencies for fiscal year 1976-77 — these proposals reflect applicable overhead and employee benefit rates for the report year.
4. *Recommendations for the Proposed 1977-78 Budget* — submitted to the Board of Supervisors by the Chief Administrative Officer on April 26, 1977. This is the proposed line-item budget. The estimated actual 1976-77 salary expenditures contained therein were used for the purpose of calculating indirect cost rate amounts to be added to net County costs in each program category.

5. Direct input from support departments where their programs and program costs did not correspond exactly with the seven Superior Court program categories.

### **Application of Cost Data**

The 1976-77 estimated actual Net County Cost figures for each program category, as contained in the *Program Analysis/Goals and Objectives* document, provided the basis for applying applicable costs. These costs reflected a combination of direct personnel expenditures (in-courtroom personnel), all other support expenditures (salaries, services and supplies, and equipment), less costs applied and revenue.

As overhead and employee benefit costs are not reflected in departmental operating budgets, they were applied by using the certified Indirect Cost Proposals submitted by each department (and verified by the Auditor-Controller) for fiscal year 1976-77. County-wide indirect cost rates and employee benefit rates for each supporting department and the Court were applied to salaries in each program category. Since gross salary figures do not appear in the program budget document, they were taken from the Recommended 1977-78 Proposed Budget (April 26, 1977) and applied as a percentage of the gross appropriation figures contained in the program budget to arrive at salary costs used for application of the overhead and employee benefit rates.

The *Program Analysis/Goals and Objectives* document contains both departmental program costs and the separate costs for departmental administrative support. Consideration was given to applying a portion of these administrative support costs to each program in lieu of the application of departmental indirect cost (overhead) rates. This approach was rejected because of the inability to consistently apply proportionate shares of administrative support costs to each applicable program and because it was determined that the indirect cost rates provided an accurate tool to arrive at administrative costs for each program.

## **Proportionate Distribution of Certain Costs**

Support departments did not have the same seven program categories as the Superior Court. It was, therefore, necessary to pro rate certain costs for some of the departmental programs. For example, the County Clerk's Civil Courts program category includes Superior Court civil, family law, probate and appellate activities. Therefore, the number of courts operating in each activity area was applied on a percentage basis to the Civil Courts program category (net county cost plus indirect costs) to arrive at a proportionate distribution for the four Superior Court program categories.

## **Rationale Used in Computing Program Costs**

Program costs, and the resultant per year and per day costs for each court, were based on the estimated actual Net County Costs for fiscal year 1976-77. This approach was selected for the following reasons:

1. It represents the most accurate estimate of costs for the period under study. The Chief Administrative Office does not undertake a final accounting of expenditures for the fiscal year based on program budget categories. By using estimated actual costs for this and subsequent years under review, the study can be updated periodically and in a consistent manner.
2. The Net County Cost figures reflect both expenditures and revenue (as well as costs applied), thus providing a much truer picture of the costs of doing business in each program category.
3. By using the program budget document as the primary reference source, extensive survey efforts were kept to a minimum and periodic updates are made simpler. The cost figures derived will have a slight error factor. The error factor is not, however, significantly greater than that which

would result from a massive "head count." In addition, the staff necessary to conduct such an extensive survey is not available.

### **Program Costs Attributable to Superior Court Operations**

The program costs (exclusive of administrative support) of the supporting departments applied to Superior Court Operations were as follows:

- County Clerk -- all program costs with the exception of marriage license and corporation operations. Revenue from Juvenile Traffic Fines was excluded.
- District Attorney -- all program costs for felony prosecution, misdemeanor appeals, juvenile proceedings, mental health proceedings and child support enforcement.
- Public Defender -- all program costs for defense of accused adults in Superior Court proceedings, misdemeanor appeals, defense of juveniles, mental health proceedings and a portion of the costs attributable to Public Defender Family Law activities.
- County Counsel -- all program costs for representation in juvenile dependency and probate matters.
- Probation Department -- all program costs for juvenile investigation and transportation, child custody and abandonment investigations, and a portion of costs for adult investigation attributable to Superior Court proceedings.
- Sheriff -- all program costs for court bailiff services and legal process serving, and a portion of court security and prisoner transportation costs attributable to Superior Court proceedings.

All Superior Court program costs were applied except the costs attributable to the Court's Juvenile Traffic Division. In calculating the costs of Juvenile Court operations per se, it is not appropriate to

include the costs of the separate Juvenile Traffic Operation. In FY 1976-77, the costs of operating the Juvenile Traffic Division (Net County Cost plus Indirect Costs) totaled \$1,317,190. These costs were significantly offset by fine revenue in the amount of \$1,228,838. This revenue is reflected in the County Clerk budget and has been excluded from calculations made to arrive at the costs of Juvenile Court operations.

In addition, expenditures for the State's portion of Superior Court judges' salaries were also included in order to reflect the most accurate costs attributable to Superior Court operations.



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